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UNCLAS KUWAIT 003552

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR HOSTS YES STUDENTS AS NEW GROUP HEADS  
TO U.S. FOR JUNIOR YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL

1. SUMMARY: On Sunday, August 6, 2005, the Ambassador hosted a reception at his residence for past and present Kuwaiti participants in the YES program, their parents and AMIDEAST-Kuwait officials. Attendees said that they loved being invited to the Embassy. The event earned wide positive press coverage promoting the YES and other exchange programs. END SUMMARY.

2. A mix of sixty guests, including past and current YES students, their abaya- or dishdasha-clad parents and AMIDEAST-Kuwait officials, mingled with Emboffs at the Ambassador's residence. The Ambassador's remarks had a visible impact on the guests as he stressed that exchange programs were a "strategic element of U.S. foreign policy" because such exchanges bridge the gaps of misunderstanding between America and the Arab world.

3. Twelve new YES students, who departed Kuwait during the early morning hours of August 9, listened attentively as the Ambassador wished them well and urged them to act as Kuwaiti Ambassadors, showing American youth that they and Kuwaiti youth "have similar aspirations and goals for education."

4. One departing student, heading to Las Vegas, was quoted in the papers saying that the YES program was a way to "introduce Kuwaiti culture to the American people." He added, "I believe I will return a better person in all aspects, and I especially want to speak fluent English and learn to play baseball."

5. One of the alumni, Batool Hassan, who attended high school in Escondido, California, commented in the newspapers that her group left Kuwait "as kids and returned as men and women." She continued, "the experience made me stronger and more confident" and that the American people were "warm and welcoming."

6. AMIDEAST colleagues informed PAS staff that the students and parents said after the event that they were thrilled to be hosted by the Ambassador in his residence. They said the event really made them "feel important."

7. Kuwait is now in its third year of the YES program, with six participants in 2003-2004, twelve participants in 2004-2005, and twelve participants for 2005-2006. All participants have said that the experience was transformational.

8. The reception received positive coverage with articles and numerous pictures in all eight of the Kuwaiti dailies:

- Al-Anba, 8/8/05, p. 7, Arabic, circ. 40,000
- Al-Qabas, 8/8/05, p. 6, Arabic, circ. 65,000
- Al-Rai Al-Aam, 8/8/05, p. 11, Arabic, circ. 80,000
- Al-Seyassah, 8/8/05, p. 7, Arabic, circ. 45,000 (one-third of the page)
- Al-Watan, 8/8/05, p. 4, Arabic, circ. 65,000
- Arab Times, 8/8/05, p. 2, English, circ. 40,000, (Headline: Exchange programs strategic element of US foreign Policy)
- Kuwait Times, 8/8/05, p. 6, English, circ. 35,000 (half-page)
- The Daily Star, 8/8/05, p. 1, English, circ. 15,000
- For pictures of the event and links to the Kuwait News Agency Report, please visit the Embassy's public website at: [http://kuwait.usembassy.gov/pr\\_08062005.html](http://kuwait.usembassy.gov/pr_08062005.html)

9. POST COMMENT: The YES program is an outstanding tool for reaching the youth audience in Kuwait. Post and host-country individuals and educational institutions agree that YES is an extremely valuable exchange program. In addition to creating young Kuwaitis knowledgeable on what makes America and Americans tick, it empowers a youth group equipped to inform their peer group on U.S. society and values and instills in most alumni a desire to continue their future studies in America. In fact, one YES alumnus from 2004-2005 decided to return to Dayton as a foreign student to finish his high school education there this year. END COMMENT.

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